*The*
# THOREAU SOCIETY
## BULLETIN

The Thoreau Society, Inc. is an informal gathering of students and followers of Henry David Thoreau. W. Stephen Thomas, Rochester, N.Y., president; Mrs. Charles MacPherson, Acton, Mass., vice-president; and Walter Harding, State University, Geneseo, N.Y. 14454, secretary-treasurer. Annual membership $2.00; life membership, $50.00. (After July 1, 1977, annual, $3.00; life, $100.00). Address communications to the secretary.

BULLETIN ONE HUNDRED THIRTY EIGHT US I S S N 0040 - 6406 WINTER 1977

A SIGNIFICANT BUDDHIST TRANSLATION BY THOREAU by Roger C. Mueller

Buried in the pages of the Dial, ignored and almost forgotten for over a century, is a translation of Buddhist scripture which marks a symbolic link between East and West, between American Transcendentalism and Mahāyāna Buddhism. The scripture is a chapter from the Saddharmapundarīka, or Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law, a series of sermons delivered by the Buddha, many of them in the form of parables. The work is a key text in Mahāyāna Buddhism, the sect of the "great vehicle" which stresses salvation for all, rather than for a select few. It is the most widespread form of Buddhism, popular in northern India, Nepal, Japan, and (formerly) in Tibet, Mongolia, and China.

The work was composed in Sanskrit about the first century A.D.. Since the original text has not survived, modern versions are based on Sanskrit or Chinese copies of the original, done in the fifth to eleventh centuries A.D.. The first translation of the work into a European language was a Sanskrit to French one done by the Orientalist Eugene Burnouf in 1843. It was based on a manuscript discovered by Brian Houghton Hodgson, an Englishman who lived in Nepal from 1820 to 1843. The manuscript was part of a valuable collection of Buddhist scriptures sent to the Societe Asiatique by Hodgson in 1837.

Current scholarly opinion holds that the first English version of this work was H. Kern's translation from the Sanskrit in 1884, as volume 21 of the Sacred Books of the East series edited by Max Müller (see, for example, Yoshirō Tamura's Introduction to The Threefold Lotus Sutra, New York and Tokyo, 1975). Actually, the first English translation appeared much earlier -- in the January, 1844 Dial (pp. 301-401) as one of the Ethnical Scriptures Emerson and Thoreau had been editing for the magazine since 1842. The translator was Thoreau himself (G.W. Cooke, An Historical and Biographical Introduction to the Dial (Cleveland, 1902), pp. 196-211, and Joel Myerson, "An Annotated List of Contributions to the Boston Dial" in Studies in Bibliography, 26 (1973), pp. 134-136).

The French text from which Thoreau made his translation, however, has eluded scholars for many years. Arthur Christy, in The Orient in American Transcendentalism (New York, 1932, pp. 286-287), correctly identified Burnouf as the French author but misidentified the source as Burnouf's Introduction à l'histoire du Buddhisme indien (Paris, 1844). After pointing out Christy's error in 1968, I speculated that the original would probably be found in a privately-distributed edition or a small circulation periodical ("The Orient in American Transcendental Periodicals (1835-1886)," unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, U. of Minn.). It turns out the latter is true. Professor Joseph Moldenhauer of the University of Texas at Austin, in the process of establishing the text of Thoreau's translations for a forthcoming volume in the Princeton edition of Thoreau's works discovered the source in not one, but two issues of the Paris magazine La revue indépendante: "Fragments des prédications de Buddha," (April 25, 1843, pp. 520-534) and "Considérations sur l'origine du Bouddhisme" (May 25, 1843) (J. Moldenhauer, et. al., eds. Early Essays and Miscellanies (Princeton, 1975), p. 304 n. and letter).

The selection in the April 25 issue is one of the twenty-eight sermons which comprise the Saddharmapundarīka: "The Parable of the Herbs." Thoreau also translated a portion of the May 25 issue as an introduction to the Dial publication.

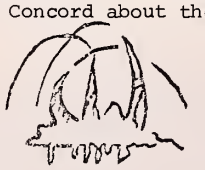
The sermon contains two parables which echo the Transcendentalist ideas of idealism and universality. The first is a story of a blind man who did not believe there were such things as beautiful and ugly forms, a sun, a moon, or stars. However, after a physician (the Buddha) applies medicinal herbs to his eyes and enables him to see, he realizes his mistake. Now, however, he becomes just as convinced that he can see everything, not realizing that sight is subject to the limitations of distance, time, walls, etc.. It is only after living a life devoted to religious practice that he becomes aware that all perception is subject to error, that sensory experience is illusory. The parallel with Lockean sensationalism vs. Transcendental idealism is obvious.

The second parable stresses the universality of the Buddha's message. It is like rain falling on the growing things, given freely to all. Each plant absorbs water according to its needs, just as those who hear the Buddha's message take what they need. The message is the same, just as the water is the same, but each adapts it to fit his particular needs. The parable might serve as a Transcendentalist response to those who were unsympathetic to the eclecticism of the Transcendentalists, an eclecticism which led them to choose whatever seemed appropriate from Christianity, Fourierism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sufism, Swedenborgianism, and other movements and philosophies. Just as the plants of varying sizes drink according to their needs, so also each person takes what he needs of the wisdom of the spirit. It's all the same rain, and the small plant will flourish just as certainly on a few drops as will the large tree on several barrels.

In like manner, the message of the Buddha found a receptive mind in Henry David Thoreau, who in turn gave Americans their first exposure to this major Buddhist work in their own tongue, forty years before the first scholarly text appeared in English.

The identification of the source for Thoreau's translation also solves a problem which perplexed the editors of Emerson's Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks. Noting that a passage which Emerson translates from Burnouf has discrepancies when compared with Burnouf's Introduction, the editors suggest that Emerson used an unidentified "intermediary source" (Ralph H. Orth and Alfred R. Ferguson, eds., JMN (Cambridge, 1971), IX, p.58n.). That source is a paragraph on page 235

of the May, 1843 article. Emerson's entry falls between ones dated 12 November and 25 December, 1843, which suggests that he became acquainted with the text about the time of Thoreau's return to Concord from Staten Island. Perhaps Thoreau found the Revue in one of the New York libraries where he was "pretty well known" as he wrote his mother on 1 October, 1843 ((The Correspondence of Henry David Thoreau, ed. Walter Harding and Carl Bode (New York, 1958), p. 141)) and brought the translation with him when he returned to Concord about the middle of November.



1-26-53

These drawings are reproduced from Thoreau's Journal. If you wish to identify them, simply look up the journal entry for the date indicated in the numerals.

5-14-53

REPORT OF THE WALKING SOCIETY by Mary R. Fenn

Recently I was pressed into service as a hostess for a special exhibit at Concord's Antiquarian Museum. In my room (the Federal Parlor) there was a beautiful Waterford glass candelabra sparkling in the light of the window behind it. You may be sure that I pointed out that it had been in Henry Thoreau's home. The reaction was really funny; a beautiful thing like that in the hut at Walden Pond! Of course I knew what they were thinking, so added that it came from his family home on Main Street. That relieved the tension but I am sure the tourists were still surprised that a lovely thing like that came from the home of a countryman who went about in corduroys and boots.

Although Concord had, and still has, no poor part of town, it does have a best part, and that is where the Thoreaus lived. In reading over old manuscripts and letters in the library archives we find that the family was included among the friends of leading people in town, and indeed lived graciously.

Not always was Henry dressed in corduroys and cowhide, for when the Fitchburg Railroad came through Concord, the twenty mile trip to Boston became commonplace. There were club meetings to attend, Elizabeth Peabody's bookstore, the Athenaeum, and one's publisher. Cambridge, only fourteen miles away, drew the Harvard graduates, Thoreau and Emerson in particular, to its library. Then too there was Longfellow's hospitable home on Tory Row, as Brattle Street was called. On one occasion Alcott, Thoreau, and Emerson dined there. Emerson, whose own home exuded charm and culture, described it as "a palace and servants, and a row of bottles of different colored wine, and fine coats." There is no reason why Thoreau should have been overwhelmed by all this; in fact he had dined there as well just the week before. I think about this occasion when the Walking Society as sometimes happens leaves the woods to visit Longfellow's home, taking part in some historic observance or just as tourists.

Even though Concord has grown tremendously since Thoreau's day, it still keeps its small town atmosphere. In spite of considerable wealth, it has the reputation of having the worst dressed people anywhere. Well, one dresses for the occasion here, as did Thoreau. If the occasion calls for raking leaves or taking the trash to the dump, one dresses accordingly, "where man meets man and not polished shoe meets polished shoe." Nor is there any nonsense about changing one's clothes before doing a few errands on the Mill Dam (Main Street) on the way home. In that respect, we in Concord are not so far removed from Thoreau's ways as one might think.

3-27-53

THE 1977 ANNUAL MEETING

This year's annual meeting will be held as usual in Concord, Mass., on Saturday, July 9th , under the direction of the president, W. Stephen Thomas. Among the speakers will be Robert Sullivan of the Rochester Museum on Thoreau and Indians. There will be a showing of a new Thoreau film. Further details of the meeting will be given in the spring bulletin.

1-14-53

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

President Thomas announces the appointment of the following nominating committee for the 1977 elections: Earl Hunsaker, Robert Needham, Samuel Wellman, and Linda Beaulieu, chairwoman. Officers to be elected include president-elect, vice-president, secretary-treasurer - all for terms for one year; and two members of the executive committee for terms of three years. Nominations should be sent immediately to the chairwoman, Mrs. Beaulieu, Flatiron Road, Holcomb, N.Y. 14469.

1-25-53

THE WALDEN CAIRN RESOLUTION

At the 1976 annual meeting, a resolution was passed asking the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management to restore the world-famed cairn to Thoreau's cabin site at Walden. The following reply has been received from Arthur Greenberg, Supervisor of Interpretive Services for the department:

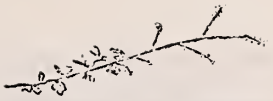
October 29, 1976

The Department of Environmental Management recognizes the significance of the cairn at Walden Pond State Reservation and the value of providing the opportunity for visitors to pay tribute to Thoreau by adding to it.

Last year the cairn was moved from the house site area to behind the headquarters building. This was done primarily because vandals were constantly throwing the rocks around and beyond the house site area, which quickly became unsightly. Already short of staff, the manhours needed to police the area was becoming a problem.

Additionally, the meaning of the cairn was not understood by a significant number of visitors and to place another interpretive sign at the house site area would precipitate a cluttered appearance. With respect to the meaning of the cairn, it needs to be housed in a more permanent location such as the future visitor information center called for in the master plan.

Moving the cairn had the approval of the Walden Pond Advisory Council and other members of local communities. I appreciate the interest and the resolution made by the Thoreau Society and look forward to when this meaningful act of placing stones will be resumed.



7-31-53

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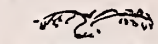
We are indebted to the following for information used in this bulletin: R.Adams, E.Allison, L. Beaulieu, W.Bottorff, W.Brink, J.Butkiss, A.Butler, R.Dick, J.Donovan, M.Dunphy, R.Epler, M.G.Fenn, R. Ganley, W.Glick,T.Haddin, G.Hannon, K.Harber, G. Hasenauer, C.Hoagland, W.Howarth, T.Hoy, R.Hull, J. Kelly, A.Kovar, T.Mansbridge, W.McInnes, M.Moss, R. Patrick, R.Poland, G.Ryan, R.Schaedle, S.Thomas, R. Thompson, J.Vickers, R.Weber, B.Witherell, and particularly Koh Kasegawa who supplied us with all the Japanese items in this bibliography. Please keep the Secretary informed of items he has missed and new items as they appear.



1-2-53

THOREAU AND ALCOTT'S PAPERS ON GOVERNMENT by Fordyce Richard Bennett

In the Alcott-Pratt Collection, there is a bound volume, Papers on Government, which contains Charles Lane's "Voluntary Political Government" and Thoreau's "Resistance to Civil Government" and "Slavery in Massachusetts."[1] The former, originating as a response to the arrest and threatened incarceration of Bronson Alcott (in January, 1843) for refusal to pay a poll tax, appeared first in The Liberator for March, 1843, running till June 16, 1843, and later in successive summer and fall, 1843, numbers of The New Age, and Concordium Gazette (the literary voice of Alcott House, Ham Common, Surrey, England). Lane, in recommending passive, nonviolent resistance to government and individualistic obedience to the higher law in the face of an immoral government's threats, anticipated the same themes found later in Thoreau's writings on government. The English Transcendentalist influenced Thoreau--an influence, according to Thoreau's biographer, on both his "ideas and actions" --through personal conversations, Concord Lyceum lectures, his Dial and Liberator contributions, and his actions (Lane suffered the same fate as Alcott eleven months later).[2] Alcott, in his September, 1851, diary, spoke of Lane's "Voluntary Political Government" and Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" as similar political statements defending man's independence of institutions and right to rule himself through compliance with the moral law. Alcott, it seems, was the first to discern the affinities between the political views of Lane and Thoreau.

NOTES: [1]Mention of materials in the Alcott-Pratt Collection is made by permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University. [2]Walter Harding, The Days of Henry Thoreau (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1962), p. 202.

8-2-52

CAN YOU HELP?

The editors of the New Princeton Edition are trying to identify some of the following references in Thoreau's Journals. Can you help them.

22 October 1837. Which Roman emperor had a chamber of mirrors?

12 December 1837. What is HDT's source for the quoted material on the spine?

16 December 1837. What is HDT's source for the quoted material on plants?

31 December 1837. What is HDT's source for the anecdote of the stone-picker?

21 January 1838. What is HDT's source for information on this Swedish inn?

7 March 1838. Through what source did HDT become familiar with this custom?

21 May 1839. Which poet? What poem or play?

28 Feb. 1840. Which friend of HDT's had died on or near this date?

4 Sept. 1839. Who is Mr. Mitchel?

1 Sept. 1839. Any information on Mr. Gurnsey?

7 August 1840. Any information about the piece? Composer? Date?

7-8-52

NOTES AND QUERIES . . . WH

Russ Mohoney, in MASTER BACKPACKER (Stackpole, 1976, p.55) suggests carrying a copy of WALDEN in your backpack to enhance your pleasure.

Tom Wilson's syndicated cartoon for July 15, 1976, says, "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it's because he hears a different drummer . . . on the other hand he may just be out of step."

The Thoreau Society of Japan held its annual meeting on May 29, 1976 at Hiroshima University where Osamu Yoshida spoke on "Reality in Thoreau's WALDEN"; Kuniyoshi Munakata on "Henry Thoreau and R.H. Blyth," and Yuji Nakata on "Commentaries on WALDEN." Officers of the society are Hikaru Saito, president; Kodo Yakagi, vice-president; T.Yamazaki, secretary; and Koh Kasegawa, secretary for East Japan. It has just issued its third society bulletin.

According to the Washington POST for Sept. 14, 1976, Ramsey Clark, the unsuccessful candidate for the Democratic nomination for senator in New York State was chided for quoting Thoreau too often!

A letter from Francis Edward Brophy of Lake Muskota, Ontario, in the June 17, 1916 CONCORD MINUTE MAN suggests that all Thoreau lovers wear a wild daisy in their buttonhole on Thoreau's birthday, July 12, each year.

Charles W. Wendte's THOMAS STARR KING: PATRIOT AND PREACHER (Boston: Beacon, 1921, p. 46) quotes from an August 1, 1854 letter from King to Rev. William Rounseville Alger, "I read Thoreau's 'Walden' in an advance copy. The first half disappointed me as being poorer than 'Concord and Merrimac.' But the latter half is wonderful; the chapter on 'Spring,' 'Winter Animals,' with a description of squirrels, the 'Conclusion' being more weird and winding farther into the awful vitalities of nature than any writing I have yet seen. I envy you your approaching rapture. Alas, I left my copy in the cars." Oddly enough Thoreau did not receive his own advance copy of WALDEN until August 2nd and the book was not officially published until the 9th. We wonder who else received advance copies and what happened to that copy King left on the train. Incidentally King, later a nationally famous Unitarian minister, was one of the earliest to quote Thoreau in print (in his WHITE HILLS (1859), but Alger, another Unitarian minister, wrote later one of the strongest condemnations of Thoreau in his GENIUS OF SOLITUDE (1866).

The MEDIA INDUSTRY NEWSLETTER for June 28, 1976, after quoting Thoreau about Americans knowing more about how to make a living than how to live, adds, "Thoreau's Daddy was rich so his risk was minimal"! That's not quite the way we heard it.

Among new Thoreau "souvenirs" we note the following: a 1977 calendar entitled "Nature Trails" with quotations from Thoreau and color nature photographs, published by American Greetings Corp. of Cleveland; a wooden plaque with color photograph and the "Only that day dawns" quotation - produced by Rustcraft; a placemat with nature drawings and the "In wildness" quotation - by Grand Award of Boston; the "different drummer" quotation on a wooden framed denim plaque - for $5.00 by April House, Lenexa, Kans. 66215; the "Beware if you see a man approaching you with the obvious interest of doing good..." quotation on parchment - by Dargis Associates, Box 86, Beltsville, Md. 20705 for $1.00; another "different drummer" plaque on wood - by Hallmark Cards for $6.00; a hot mat with the "Seen as God sees them, all things are alive and beautiful" quotation with wild life drawings - by Bright Crest, Box 1000, Rocky Mount, Va. 24151, $1.25; a new version of Hallmark's old "I dreamed I was your valentine in my Henry Thoreau Sweatshirt"; a cloth imbedded in plastic bookmark of the "different drummer" by Quality Industries of Philadelphia 19138; an aluminum medallion with a view of Highland Light and the "A man may stand there and put all America behind him" quotation - sold at the Cape Cod National Seashore headquarters; and perhaps the most unusual - the "different drummer" "The most I can do for my friend is simply to be his friend" quotations on 10" x 7" stained glass plaques - by Wallace Berrie & Co., 7628 Densmore Ave., Van Nuys, Ca. 91406.

The following have recently become life members of the society: William Bottorff, Toledo, Ohio; Mary Chamberlin, Concord, Mass.; John Duston, Concord, Mass.; Russell Gregory, Ionia, Mich.; Michael Jamison, Seattle, Wash.; Mrs. Marcia Moss, Concord, Mass.; Martha Jo Rodgers, San Diego, Calif.; Mrs. Herbert Smith, Southbury, Conn.; William Younglove, Long Beach, Calif.; and Sherman Zelinsky, Danville, Ill. Life membership is now fifty dollars but will be raised to one hundred on July 1, 1977.

Mary Gail Fenn writes that the Thoreau quotation queried in the Fall Bulletin ("She with one breath attunes the spheres...") is from Thoreau's poem "Inspiration."

J. Parker Huber of Eastern Connecticut State College in Willimantic will conduct a field study course (3 credits) in "Thoreau's Maine Woods", Aug. 2-23.

The Dec. 5 New York Times revealed that the favorite current reading of John Dean of Watergate notoriety is The Selected Works of Thoreau and that it made him "think about what is important in life." Too bad more Watergate participants didn't discover HDT earlier.

The Walter Douglas estate overlooking Lake Minnetonka in Minnesota, described as having "formal gardens, terraces, fountains, a walled-in /!/ formal courtyard, marble floors, carved ceilings, and imported fireplaces" is named "Walden"!

Both a toy shop in Solon, Maine, and a women's sportswear shop on Lexington Avenue in NYC are named "A Different Drummer." Perhaps the latter should feature the women's dress line named "Walden Classics" now sold by Filene's in Boston.

An undated letter (but probably of the 1840's) from Elizabeth Hoar to her friends the Bowles of Springfield now in its Bowles family papers, has this to report: "David /H.D.T./ had a party of gentlemen, Thursday evening, to eat melons. I went in to see the table, which was adorned with sunflowers, cornstalks, beet leaves & squash- blossoms. There were forty-six melons, fifteen different kinds; & apples, all the production of his own garden. This is the only thing of interest that has happened in town this week. When we went in to see the tables, Mrs. Thoreau felt called upon to apologize for Henry having a party, it having been spread abroad by her that such customs met with his contempt & entire disapprobation."

5-8-53

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